

U.S. Embassy Manila
Warden Message
April 5, 2010

THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IS TRANSMITTING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION THROUGH THE EMBASSY WARDEN SYSTEM AS A PUBLIC SERVICE TO AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES. PLEASE DISSEMINATE THIS MESSAGE TO ALL U.S. CITIZENS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION OR NEIGHBORHOOD. THANK YOU.

TRAVEL WARNING
PHILIPPINES

The State Department warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to the southern Philippine islands of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, and urges extreme caution if traveling there. Sporadic violence throughout the Philippines is also possible before and after the May 10 national and local elections and the June 30 inaugurations. This replaces the Travel Warning dated September 17, 2009, to reflect continuing threats due to terrorist and insurgent activities, as well as possible concerns about election related violence.

Travelers should exercise extreme caution if traveling in the central and western portions of the island of Mindanao, as well as in the islands of the Sulu Archipelago. Regional terrorist groups have carried out bombings resulting in injuries and death. Since August 2008, sporadic clashes have occurred between lawless groups and the Philippine Armed Forces in the Mindanao provinces of North Cotabato, Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte, as well as the Sulu Archipelago.

Kidnap-for-ransom gangs are active throughout the Philippines and have targeted foreigners. U.S. Government employees must seek special permission for travel to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago. Travelers to these areas should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public areas. Some foreigners who reside in or visit Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago hire their own security.

The Philippine government declared a state of emergency on November 24, 2009, for the two provinces of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat, as well as Cotobato City, as a result of election-related violence. This state of emergency is still in effect. Travelers should be aware of heightened police activity and significant military presence in these areas. They should carefully research restrictions imposed upon travel and follow the instructions of government officials with regard to limitations on movement.

U.S. citizens traveling, living, and working throughout the Philippines are urged to exercise heightened caution in public gathering places where events may occur in relation to the May 2010 Philippine elections and June inauguration. In past election years, deaths have occurred because of election-related violence, even in the period of time following election dates and inauguration ceremonies. U.S. citizens should exercise caution when traveling in the vicinity of demonstrations since they can turn confrontational and possibly escalate to violence.

The Department of State remains concerned about the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. The Worldwide Caution reminds U.S. citizens that terrorism can occur anywhere.

The Department strongly encourages U.S. citizens in the Philippines to register with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Manila through the State Department's travel registration website. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, the 24-hour telephone number is 63-2-301-2000. The American Citizens Services (ACS) section's fax number is 63-2-301-2017 and the ACS web page can be accessed online.

For information on general crime and security issues, U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for the Philippines and the Worldwide Caution, located at the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website. U.S. citizens may also obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 from the United States and Canada, or 202-501-4444 from overseas.